

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

July 17, 1973

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Amin Detains 111 Peace Corps Volunteers

In the aftermath of his detention of 111 Peace Corps Volunteers ultimately destined for Zaire last weekend, President Amin called in our Charge July 10 and declared that he had wanted to assure himself that their plane flying to Burundi would not worsen the situation in that area. He offered no apologies for his action and sought to make a virtue of the fact that the Volunteers were well treated. The Department has instructed the Charge to deliver a firm oral and written protest to the Foreign Ministry and request an explanation and we already have called in the Ugandan Charge here to make a similar demarche.

While our overall problems with the Amin regime are not likely to diminish nor are our relations likely to improve, we believe that the experience of this latest incident effectively demonstrates the importance of maintaining our present minimum diplomatic presence in Uganda. Our Charge and his small staff helped ensure the welfare of the Volunteers at all times and the Embassy kept us abreast of developments, thus making it possible for the Department to give parents, journalists and Congressmen timely reassurance. While our efforts in Kampala may have had little direct effect on Amin himself, our access to Foreign Ministry, East African Airways and other officials on the spot was highly useful.

Moreover, we may well need our Embassy for such purposes again. There still are some 260 private Americans in the country, most of them missionaries whom Amin periodically accuses of being engaged in subversive activities financed by the CIA. A rupture

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
GDS

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

-2-

of relations would not reduce the amount of verbal abuse Amin showers upon us nor have any other salutary effect on our bilateral relations. On the contrary, it would deprive us of our still significant ability to aid Americans in Uganda, to exert what limited leverage we have on the Ugandan Government, and to maintain any contact with the Ugandan people, with whom we have long-established and friendly ties in many quarters. Moreover, it would be viewed even by some friendly African governments and by some elements of the American public as a petty response to outrageous remarks by an irrational demagogue.

We are continuing to advise Americans who inquire against traveling to Uganda, and have so informed a large contingent planning to attend an international YMCA conference next week in Kampala.



Kenneth Rush
Acting Secretary

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED

PA/HO Department of State

E.O. 12958, as amended

May 4, 2006

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E.O. 12958

By LE NARA Date 10/18/00

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES